

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 0215

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UNSC, RH, UK
SUBJ: RHODESIA AND THE SC PRESIDENCY IN FEBRUARY

REF: USUN 194

SUMMARY: IF RHODESIA SITUATION SURFACES IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN FEBRUARY, US MAY FIND ITSELF IN SC PRESIDENCY DURING THE HANDLING OF THE ITEM IN FEBRUARY AND IN POSITION HAVING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO ACCEPT CHAIR OR STEP ASIDE IN FAVOR OF BENEZUELA. END SUMMARY.

1. WHETHER AS CONSEQUENCE APPARENT BREAKDOWN RHODESIA TALKS OR EXPANSION OF SANCTIONS (USUN 194), RHODESIAN SITUATION MAY COME BEFORE SC IN FEBRUARY.

2. UNDER NORMAL GEOGRAPHIC ROTATION OF PRESIDENCY, UK WILL HOLD THE OFFICE FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY, WITH US SUCCEEDING TO CHAIR IN MARCH. RULE 20 OF SC RULES PROVIDES THAT, IF THE PRESIDENT DEEMS THAT FOR PROPER FULFILLMENT RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRESIDENCY HE SHOULD NOT PRESIDE DURING CONSIDERATION OF A PARTICULAR QUESTION, HE MAY STEP ASIDE DURING DISCUSSION OF THAT QUESTION AND CHAIR WILL DEVOLVE TO NEXT MEMBER IN ENGLISH ALPHABETICAL ROTATION
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(US IN THIS CASE).

3. IT NOT CERTAIN UK WOULD OPT TO STEP ASIDE, AND DECISION TO STEP ASIDE HAS BEEN WHOLLY WITHIN DISCRETION OF PRESIDENT. PAST UK PRACTICE (RHODESIA IN 1968 AND UK-ICELAND DISPUTE IN 1975) INDICATES CONSIDERABLE POSSIBILITY UK MAY STEP ASIDE AT LEAST FOR ANY DISCUSSION OF BREAKDOWN OF TALKS

AND POSSIBILITY ON ANY OTHER ASPECT RHODESIAN SITUATION
SUCH AS EXPANSION OF SANCTIONS. CHAIR WOULD THEN PASS TO
US BY OPERATION OF RULE 20.

4. ALTHOUGH OUR INVOLVEMENT WITH RHODESIAN SITUATION
DIFFERENT IN KIND AND DEGREE FROM UK, SOME STATES MAY
RECALL KISSINGER ROLE IN LAYING GROUND FOR GENEVA TALKS
AND RATIONALE US STATED PUBLICALLY EARLIER THIS
MONTH FOR ABSTENTION ON SC RESOLUTION ON BOTSWANA SITUATION,
I.E., OUR SPECIAL INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA TALKS. WE DO
NOT SUGGEST US NEED FEEL ANY OBLIGATION, LEGAL, MORAL
OR TACTICAL, TO STEP ASIDE, THOUGH DEPARTMENT SHOULD
BE AWARE OTHERS MAY CONSIDER THAT THE QUESTION ARISES.
INDEED WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE INADVISABLE FOR US TO STEP
ASIDE SINCE OUR INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA NOT IMPORTANTLY
GREATER THAN INVOLVEMENT ANY GLOBAL POWER IN ANY HOT SPOT.
MOREOVER, POTENTIALLY MILDLY LUDICROUS MUSICAL CHAIRS
GAME OF FIRST UK THAN US STEPPING ASIDE WOULD LIKELY DISCOURAGE
SOME OF THE PRESSURE FOR US TO DO SO, AT LEAST IN FEBRUARY.

4. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE US STEPPED DOWN FROM PRESIDENCY
IN 1948 WHEN BERLIN WAS SUBJECT UNDER DISCUSSION. REPUBLIC
OF CHINA DID SO IN 1950 WHEN CHIREP ISSUE DISCUSSED,
INDIA IN 1951 WHEN KASHIMR DISCUSSED AND LEBANON IN 1954
WHEN MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSED. IN ALL CASES PRESIDENTS
INDICATED THEY WERE EXERCISING THEIR OWN DISCRETION IN
STEPPING ASIDE. THERE ARE NUMEROUS EXAMPLES WHEN PRESIDENTS
DID NOT STEP DOWN INCLUDING USSR IN 1950 FOLLOWING RESUMPTION
OF ITS SEAT WHEN KOREA DISCUSSED, FRANCE IN 1956 WHEN SUEZ
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DISCUSSED NOR SYRIA IN 1948 WHEN PALESTINE DISCUSSED.
THERE ARE NO DOUBT MANY OTHER EXAMPLES.
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